
PARKS DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Dedication Scheduled for Sandy Hansen Shoreline
Trail at Millennium Park**

GRAND RAPIDS – Construction is complete on a new wetlands boardwalk at Millennium Park. The boardwalk connects the Hansen Nature Trail to a popular trail loop surrounding the main lake at the park. Funding for the project was donated in memory of Sandy Hansen, a passionate park supporter who passed away in January 2014. Now the trail surrounding the lake is recognized as the Sandy Hansen Shoreline Trail. Together, the Hansen Trails include a one mile nature trail and nearly two miles of paved, multi-purpose trail.

The Hansen Nature Trail, at the northeast corner of Butterworth Drive and Riverbend SW, is a crushed stone path loop that explores scenic ponds and wetlands in the 1,500 acre park. The area is filled with an amazing diversity of birds and mammals, native and non-native trees, unique ponds, wildflowers and native plants. In contrast, the Sandy Hansen Shoreline Trail offers a 1.9 mile paved trail loop connecting the park's main recreational area to the far side of the central lake and back. With the link provided by the new wetlands boardwalk, trail users can easily branch off the Shoreline Trail to explore and enjoy the more remote natural area.

"The Hansen's gift is a wonderful opportunity to provide the public with a route that safeguards protected wetlands while recognizing the uniqueness of this special area," said Roger Sabine, Director of Kent County Parks. "We are appreciative of the Hansen's dedication and love for our natural ecosystems and their recognition of the role Kent County Parks plays in preserving these resources. We hope the boardwalk will encourage visitors of all ages and abilities to enjoy the scenic wetlands in a way that was not possible before today."

Sandy, who passed away in January 2014, is remembered for her passion for nature and birds. She volunteered for West Michigan Environmental Action Council, was active in the Audubon Society, and was a long-time supporter of parks. Her husband of 49 years, Dick Hansen, along with their children, Rick, Beth, Kristi and eleven grandchildren, pledged this gift in Sandy's honor to memorialize her love of nature and parks. Dick and Sandy Hansen previously funded construction of the Hansen Nature Trail, giving visitors a chance to experience the unique natural fen at the western edge of the park.

Millennium Park is one of the largest urban parks in the United States. Kent County Parks manages an extensive network of paved and natural-surfaced trails within the boundaries of the park's 1,500 acres. The popular trail system at Millennium Park is open to non-motorized and non-equestrian use. The Hansen Nature Trail is open to foot traffic only. To learn more about Kent County parks and trails, check out the Parks Department website at www.kentcountyparks.org.

MEDIA NOTE: *You are invited to a dedication ceremony for the Sandy Hansen Shoreline Trail on Wednesday, July 6, 2016 at 11 a.m. at Millennium Park. Members of the Hansen Family and Parks Department will be available for interviews, and space is available for live shots for newscasts.*

We hope to see you there!

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